The Prison Education and Action Project

The United States leads the world in incarceration. Just five percent of the world's population, the U.S. has 25 percent of the world's prisoners. This system of "mass incarceration" is an index of inequality, as prisoners are disproportionately poor people from communities of color. Yet there is, perhaps, a change afoot. Prompted by the economic crisis, states around the country are engaged in a long-term re-evaluation of their carceral policies. While it is too early to say for sure, it is possible that the era of unending prison construction and "tough-on-crime" policies might be coming to an end.

What is, or should, the university's role be in understanding mass incarceration, serving the communities most impacted by it, and creating policy alternatives to promote community justice? This poster asks these questions and showcases an emerging project that is coordinated in tandem with the Office of Community Based Learning and Research. The poster introduces the crisis of mass incarceration and emphasizes key dimensions of university engagement with this issue. In particular, I emphasize three primary areas of work that combine high-impact student learning with high-impact social change. These include higher education access for people in prison; public education about the prison system; and creating alternative policies and structures. Each of these approaches engages community partners in the Seattle area, as the poster makes clear. It also speaks to student interests at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

I look forward to talking with you about the project and hearing any ideas or suggestions you may have for how this project can grow and succeed at UW Bothell.

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